Yahveh's Peculiar Token — ختنہ

What are the history, ethnography and meaning of Circumcision (= the cutting round). It is a Jewish rite commanded, it is claimed, by Yahveh as a token of a covenant with the Israelites through Abram: "Every male-child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen. 17:10) when Yahveh promised to Abram (from that day called Abraham) "all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession" (verse 8); from that day, also, Yahveh is the Jewish god.

The rite was performed on the eighth day after birth (Exodus 12:44; John 7:22). Christianity rejects the ceremony, although it is claimed by many that Jesus was circumcised

The cutting of the prepuce "shall be a token of the covenant between me & you" (Gen. 17:11) said Yahveh to Abraham. Yahveh's signs, tokens, proofs of his promises & agreements, usually turned out to be futile, from the very beginning. So it is about the Sabbath & circumcision.

That silly circumcision rite was never introduced by Yahveh, as falsely reported in the biblical Dream Book, and is not distinctly Hebraic or Jewish as also falsely claimed; in fact, circumcision has been practiced, independently & without any command from Yahveh, in Egypt (says Herodotus), in Africa (say Bonwick & Higgins); in Australia (says Amberly); in Assyria (Inman & Bonwick); in Abyssinia (Kendrick), in Old Mexico (Acosta, Amberly, Higgins), in the Andes & the Amazon (Orton), especially among savages of various countries. So what becomes of Yahveh's sign.

The rite was not particularly Semitic; the eastern & northern Semites did not practice circumcision,

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it was, in fact, a primitive Arabian practice, whence it was introduced in Turkey, India & Persia; then it was adopted by the Western & Southern Semites. It fell into disuse later in Egypt and in Phoenicia. Origen claims that the priests underwent the operation, for which they were justly ridiculed.

As to its meaning there is disagreement. Its practice has been connected with the Sun-god. Herodotus mentions cleanliness. Philo the Jew adds the avoidance of carbuncle, as symbolizing purity of heart, also to secure many children. It might interest you to see Jeremiah 9:25,26; Gen. 22 (paschal lamb); Exodus 13: 11-16 (redemption of the first-born); I Samuel 18:25, where Saul says: "The King desireth not any dowry but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines". It is also thought that a prepuce, being sacrificed, would then preserve the whole body; all other mutilations, however, were strictly forbidden to the circumcised Jews, as being heathenish, even marring the corner of the beard (Lev. 19:27) even, also, "They shall not make baldness" (21:5). All that silliness was gradually and finally spiritualized; example, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart." (Deut. 11:16) a bathos strangely repeated by Jeremiah in 4:4.

In conclusion, I might mention the circumcision of women by the mutilation of the clitoris, often connected with infibulation (from L. fibula, meaning clasp, fastener, even padlock), to prevent coition. That horror was common in Arabia & Egypt, says Strabo; also on both shores of the Persian Gulf, says Niebuhr (in "Description de l'Arabie", p.70). Generally, for details consult Ewald, "Antiquities of Israel", Gardner Wilkinson's "Ancient Egypt", also Chabas, in Revue Archeologique, III 298-30

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